

FITNESS TRAIL DISCUSSED AT MEETING OF BERKS COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



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BERN TOWNSHIP, PA

An approximately mile-long fitness trail for biking, jogging and walking, and other activities along the Schuylkill River now looks to be a real possibility for the planned 155-acre manufacturing/business Berks Park 183 just south of the Reading Regional Airport.

There's lots of potential for a trail, and it's really beautiful back there," said Bern Township Manager Brian L. Potts, adding that such recreational and health activities could be an amenity for the park's 500-plus future full-time employees.

"One could even fish there for small-mouth bass, and of course let them go," he added.

Thomas C. McKeon, executive director of the Berks County Industrial Development Authority, said plans call for construction of seven buildings - ranging from 20,000 square feet to 234,880 square-feet - with a total of 816,200 square feet of flex space.

Ninety acres of trees were recently cleared south of Aviation Road, allowing each of the planned building sites to already be marked with poles, with flags on top, to help visualize the buildings' footprints, he added.

McKeon said that he, Potts and Steve Edwards, the township's assistant road foreman, recently walked the terrain to take measurements, analyze potential costs and draw up a preliminary layout for the 1.1-mile long trail.

"The township is proposing a 10-foot-wide stone trail, except for areas where we found an old macadam roadbed under the dirt and leaves," Potts said. "Surprisingly, the path seems to be in really good shape with no vegetation, and finding those macadam areas is like finding a diamond in the rough."

The nonprofit Schuylkill River Greenways Association, which partnered with Bern several years ago to build a similar but shorter trail near Leesport, would help finance the trail that likely would be built by township personnel, Potts said.

McKeon noted that for the past several months Liberty Environmental Inc. of Reading has been doing a subsurface analysis of a former police shooting range at the south side of the park where a lot of lead had been discovered.

"It was an active shooting range for decades, and results of the study are expected in January," he said at the authority's recent meeting.

McKeon added that, "We already have several serious prospects for Berks Park 183."